Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

Logic Models—Tools to Bridge the Theory-Research-Practice Divide

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This Viewpoint suggests that logic models applied by investigators may provide a supportive trestle in bridging theoretical interventions and real-world applications.

Clinical investigators must confront the challenge of developing interventions that are based on sound theory and can be implemented in real-world settings. In research, the standard tool to help address the sound theory component of this challenge is the conceptual model, which can be useful in relating broad theoretical constructs but often lacks the operational specificity to anticipate or explain potential intervention outcomes in real life. To adequately identify and account for the complexity of most interventions—which can range from the administration of a single medication to a multifaceted program—and how their results may be affected by conditions in the field, we need other tools. The logic model is a tool often relegated to program evaluation that clinicians and researchers can use in designing and interpreting the results of interventions. In this commentary, we define logic models and discuss their potential value in bridging the theory-research-practice divide frequently encountered in medicine.

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